



3 candidates seek GOP nod for supervisor

Former police chief, ex-board member to face incumbent in Forks primary.

Sunday, March 27, 2005

By CHRIS POLLOCK
The Express-Times

FORKS TWP. – Plenty of Republicans think they have the right stuff to sit on the township's board of supervisors.

Two candidates – Robert J. Fretz, 75, of Mitman Road, and Leon J. Fisher, 59, of Youngs Hill Road – are seeking the party's nomination for the seat occupied by Republican Henning Holmgaard. Holmgaard has also announced he is running for re-election. Whoever wins the primary on May 17 will face C. David Howell, the only Democratic nominee, in the general election.

Holmgaard, 61, of Dogwood Terrace, took office in 2000. He replaced Fretz, who retired.

A retired foreign car dealer, Fretz said he was re-entering township politics because he was disappointed with the recent performance of the board.

"After 4 years of Mr. Holmgaard I decided something had to be done," he said. "All he's done is sat in that chair and spend money. The five (supervisors) sit up there and don't make a damn decision on anything."

Fretz said problems handling growth in the township have been exacerbated by the board's failure to prevent over-development of small areas. He said he intends to lobby the state government for help.

"We're going to find a way to cease and desist on this growth," he said. "Everything that's transpired in New York and New Jersey has now become our problem."

Holmgaard immigrated to the United States from Denmark in 1969 and now owns a realty business in Clinton, N.J. He listed the development of a new municipal office complex and overhauling the administration of the police department as some of the major achievements of the board during his tenure.

Holmgaard said the board has done its best to control growth under the zoning ordinances passed by previous boards, including under Fretz.

"He was on the board when they passed the current zoning ordinance," Holmgaard said. "There was no way when that zoning ordinance was passed that there could not be an expectation that (the township) could not be built up based on that ordinance. And that is what has happened."

Holmgaard said development has reached such a point that from here out the board would merely have a caretaker role.

"There's plans on the board for all the land that under the zoning ordinance was expected to be developed, except for a spot here or there," he said. "It's kind of tough to tell them or expect the developers not to develop. All you can do is try and get the horse to run the way you want it."

Development and population growth were also prominent topics mentioned by Fisher and Howell.

Fisher was the chief of police in the township for seven years until 2004, when he resigned.

In a formal statement on his candidacy published in February, Fisher said he wants to serve the township as a supervisor because communication between the board and residents must be improved. Fisher also

notes he wants to run because supervisors are not properly addressing "rapid growth problems" and allowing appointed officials to make decisions.

"I have dedicated a lifetime of service to Forks Township and want the residents to determine whether I should continue serving the community," Fisher wrote.

Fisher spent his final year as chief on paid suspension while the state Department of General Services determined whether he had violated a federal purchasing program. The state determined Fisher and other township officials improperly used the program when they purchased surplus items for themselves.

The state levied a \$4,700 fine against the township in March 2004, and Fisher retired the following month.

When asked if last year's events would adversely affect his campaign Fisher said, "That's something the residents are going to have to decide."

Howell, 63, of Paxinosa Road, is a retired attorney in his first race for public office. He has served on the township's zoning hearing board since January 2004. He also cited growth as an issue of prime concern.

"I believe that Forks is at a crossroad in its development as a community," Howell said in a statement. "And I want to ensure that the direction of its growth is positive and beneficial to all its residents."

Howell was born and raised in Easton and has family roots in Forks Township. His father, the late Chauncey D. Howell, served as township solicitor. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia, and graduated from the Villanova School of Law.

Howell previously lived in Illinois and worked as a tax attorney for the state attorney general and in the private sector for J.P. Morgan Chase.

(Reporter Chris Pollock can be reached at 610-258-7171 or by e-mail at cpollock@express-times.com.)

Copyright 2005 PennLive.com. All Rights Reserved.